Study of the Diaoyu Islands: A Continuation of Document-Based Research in the Style of Jean-Marc F. Blanchard

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Abstract

This article reconstructs a dual line of history concerning the provenance of the Diaoyu Islands. The first line of this dual history is the historical chain, namely the academic flow of knowledge of the Diaoyu Islands, traced first from Xu Baoguang 徐葆光, a Chinese, to Antoine Gaubil, to Philipp Franz von Siebold, then to Matthew C. Perry. The second chain is the historical chain of events shaped by international
relations, which is traced in this article in the manner of scholars such as Blanchard and others. The logical inference from the reconstruction of such a dual line of history is that the confusion over the provenance of the Diaoyu Islands could have been cleared in at least two critical junctions, first in events of 1751 and second in the events of 1951. The contribution of this article is twofold. First, the inference drawn from the reconstruction of this dual line of history concerning the provenance of the Diaoyu Islands supports the opinion that the Chinese discovered the Diaoyu Islands originally. Second, this article tries to illustrate the ideal of academic exchange of information that is both broad and deep and the need for continual dialogue between nations, as this is a lesson that cannot be forgotten if there is to be lasting peace and harmony in the world village.

1. Introduction

In this article, the issue of the provenance of the Diaoyu Islands is explored first. Because this issue evolved across both the East and the West and across several countries and several centuries, it is perhaps useful to begin with a brief timeline illustrating this scope.

Between 770 B.C. and 222 B.C. the oldest general term for the sea region in the East (China) Sea including the Diaoyu Islands was Lie gu ye 列姑射, recorded in Chinese ancient book Shan hai jing, Hainei bei jing 山海經·海內北經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas, Geographic Records of the North Within the Chinese Borders). Between 581 A.D. and 617 A.D., Gao hua yu 高華嶼, the old name for today’s Diaoyu Island, was mentioned in Sui shu, Liuqiu guo zhuan 隋書·流求國傳 (Book of Sui, Historical Records of the Liuqiu Kingdom). Between 960 A.D. and 1280 A.D., Gao hua yu together with other two adjacent islands were recorded in Fang yu sheng lan 方輿勝覽 (A Survey of the Chinese Landscape). In 1556 A.D., Zheng Shungong 鄭舜功 wrote Riben yi jian, Fu hai tu jing, Juan er, Canghai jin jing 日本一鑒.桴海圖經.卷二.滄海津鏡 (A Study of Japan, Part II, Maps of the Sea Route from China to Japan, Volume II, Brief Outline of the Sea Route) with mention of the Diaoyu Islands as adjacent to Chinese Taiwan. In 1719, Xu Baoguang 許保光 wrote Zhongshan chuan xin lu 中山傳信錄 (Records of the Mission to Liuqiu) with mention of Kume Island as the southwest boundary island of Liuqiu between Liuqiu and China. In 1751, Antoine Gaubil translated parts of Zhongshan chuan xin lu into French for European distribution.1